

# WESTON OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FORUM

October 25, 2018

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Weston Public Library Community Room

## MEETING NOTES

*A video recording of the event is available at:*

<http://weston.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=600575b8-6c67-487d-901f-dd92e0439cc6>

6:30 pm – 7:00 pm

### **Meet and Greet**

7:10 pm – 8:20 pm

### **Reports from Groups**

Weston committees, organizations, and groups were asked to provide 5 minute introductions, including their mission, 1-3 open space or recreation-related projects or initiatives upcoming in the next year, and opportunities for collaboration with others in town.

Joel Angiolillo, co-chair of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, opened the meeting. He explained that one of the goals of the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan was to improve coordination among committees, groups, and organizations working on open space and recreation-related initiatives, and that this forum is a step in that direction. He emphasized that this forum is an opportunity to ask for help in reaching common objectives and identifying places where collaboration can occur. Reports were as follows.

### **Weston Conservation Commission, presented by Laurie Bent**

#### *Mission*

To protect and manage Weston's 2000 acres of conservation land and 90 miles of trails; to add to that when possible; and to administer the Wetlands Protection Act. Trail management occurs with the help of Weston Forest and Trail Association (WFTA), through the work of WFTA's Trails Manager.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To persuade the Town to vote to purchase the 2-parcel Wellington Farms property, which total approximately 13 acres. Soil contamination is currently being remediated by the landowner. The Conservation Commission is working hard to get to a Purchase and Sale Agreement ready for a May Town Meeting vote.

- To complete a Case Estates Ecological Management Plan. The Case Estates was purchased by the Town in 2016, and the Ecological Management Plan will provide guidance for the maintenance and stewardship of the property over the next 5-7 years.

*Opportunity for Collaboration*

The Conservation Commission would like to coordinate better with the Planning Board to have trail easements and trail connections consistently worked into development and re-development projects, in order to grow and improve Weston's trail network. The CC is also seeking support at Town Meeting for the protection of the Wellington Farms property.

**Weston Recreation Commission, presented by Eric Rosenthal**

*Mission*

To provide public recreation programming and facilities to the town and its residents and to manage Weston's recreational facilities, such as the Memorial Pool and parks.

*Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To absorb the Weston Skating Club at Rivers School and begin administering this program.
- To partner with the Rail Trail Advisory Committee on new initiatives related to the Rail Trail.
- To manage the growth of programming, a particular challenge being an anticipated out-growing of the Community Center due to growing programming needs.
- To problem solve around declining out-of-town membership in Memorial Pool and the budgetary challenges that decline poses.

*Opportunity for Collaboration*

The Recreation Commission looks forward to collaborating with the Council on Aging to provide more programming for their clients, and to providing new programming in collaboration with the new Rail Trail friends group as that develops. The Recreation Commission will also be working with the Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee and the School Committee to look at aging recreational facilities throughout town.

**Weston Forest & Trail Association (WFTA), presented by Meg Kelly and Joel Angiolillo**

### *Mission*

WFTA has been in existence since 1955. In 2012, WFTA merged with the Weston Land Trust. The mission is two-fold: to assist with trails management and get people out on Weston's 90+ miles of trails, including keeping the trail map updated; and to conduct open space protection activities.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- WFTA sadly lost its Treasurer of decades, George Bates, this year. He left behind an endowment that allows WFTA to maintain trails and undertake other important projects. To honor him, the endowment will be renamed in his memory. This year's WFTA annual meeting in May will focus on celebrating George Bates.
- To develop a network of safe, marked pedestrian loops throughout town, utilizing trails, sidewalks, and low-traffic streets, called Weston Walks. Weston Walks will be modeled after a program in Lexington called ACROSS Lexington. Weston Walks will build off of the trail network already in place in Weston, provide connectivity on sidewalks or other safe walking areas where trails don't currently exist, and incorporate and possibly expand on some of the long-haul trail routes already existing in town, such as the Weston Aqueduct Trail and the Bay Circuit Trail.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

To develop the Weston Walks network, WFTA will need to collaborate with the Conservation Commission, the Traffic and Sidewalk Committee, DPW, the Recreation Commission, and other entities whose land and facilities the network would cross.

## **Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee, presented by Kristin Barbieri**

### *Mission*

The Recreation Master Plan Steering Committee was formerly the Fields Committee; the mission is to launch a 14-week Master Plan to look at what recreational facilities exist in town, what condition they are in, and what improvements need to be made moving forward.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To prepare the Recreation Master Plan starting in November 2018.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

The Master Plan process will involve collaboration with the Recreation Commission, Traffic and Sidewalk Committee, School Committee, and others.

### **Planning Board, presented by Imai Aiu**

#### *Mission*

To review project development per the Town of Weston Zoning Bylaws, including flexible subdivisions and houses along Scenic Roads.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To provide technical advisory and outreach for two 40-B projects currently proposed in Weston, at 751 Boston Post Road and at the Boston Properties site, both of which have wetlands and trails on the properties.
- To develop a water conservation policy for Weston. Weston has the highest water use of any of the MWRA communities, due to lawn irrigation.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

Enhancing and preserving trails on the 40-B projects coming before the town; working trail and open space preservation into flexible subdivisions; and figuring out how to better conserve water in Weston.

### **Traffic and Sidewalk Committee (TSAC), presented by Jay Doyle**

#### *Mission*

To deal with all matters having to do with mobility, whether on roadways or walkways, throughout town. TSAC doesn't implement projects but rather provides recommendations and planning advice to the Board of Selectmen, which takes action on these projects.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To advance design on improvements to the Route 20/School Street/Wellesley Street intersections, and to get this into the State's Transportation Improvement Program for funding.
- To advance the Route 30 Improvement Project from end to end; this project is not to widen Route 30 but to provide better multi-modal access for bicycles and pedestrians.
- To address complaints from neighborhoods regarding impacts from cut-through traffic.

- To move several sidewalk projects through the pipeline, including Ash Street (with connections to the Weston Reservoir and Case Estates), Merriam Street, and Warren Ave.

#### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

TSAC works closely with the Police Department, the Town Engineer, and the Conservation Commission when sidewalks or walkways are near wetlands or on conservation land. TSAC works with the Planning Board when sidewalks or walkways are along Scenic Roads and historic stone walls.

### **Weston Affordable Housing Trust (WAHT), presented by Ken Newberg**

#### *Mission*

To preserve and administer the affordable housing currently in their portfolio, which at this time includes 5 units on Warren Avenue, and to create new units, which includes 2 new units coming online in November. WAHT's policy is to solely pursue small, neighborhood-scale affordable housing units, not 40-Bs.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To explore a new small-scale (2-6 unit) affordable housing development on Wellesley Street.
- To begin working with a realtor to help find properties that might be sold for below-market value to be developed into small-scale affordable housing units.

#### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

WAHT would like to collaborate with others in the community to identify potential properties for future small-scale affordable housing units. This land could be purchased in collaboration with conservation, recreation, and open space interests, so that a small portion of the property gets used for affordable housing and the surrounding land is protected as open space or used for recreation purposes.

### **Weston Historical Commission (WHC), presented by Phyllis Halpern**

#### *Mission*

The WHC serves as the Town's official body for administering the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. WHC is tasked with maintaining and creating an inventory of historic assets; protecting these assets from neglect, deterioration, demolition, and unsympathetic development; and providing

education opportunities for understanding the history of Weston. The WHC promotes the idea that “the greenest building is one that is already built,” and that existing buildings should be maintained and repurposed rather than new ones erected, in order to preserve energy and resources.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To work with the Permanent Building Committee and Weston Arts and Innovation Center to restore and reuse the Old Library.
- To work with the Permanent Building Committee and the Town Center Planning Committee to restore the Josiah Smith Tavern and put it into use as a restaurant and non-profit work space. The funding request for this project is expected to come to May Town Meeting.
- To work with the School Committee to renovate and restore the Case House. The funding request for this project is expected to come to May Town Meeting.
- To develop preservation restrictions on the 3 structures at the Case Estates.
- To restore grave markers at the two cemeteries along Boston Post Road, using Community Preservation Committee funding.
- To work with the Rail Trail Advisory Committee, neighboring towns, and the future Rail Trail friends group to provide interpretive material for the historic artifacts located along the Mass Central Rail Trail, which were preserved during construction at WHC’s request.
- To request Community Preservation Act funding at May Town Meeting to put preservation restrictions on two of Weston’s oldest structures, the John Warren Homestead at 71 Lexington Street and the Lilac House at 120 Summer Street.

#### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

See above.

### **Sustainable Weston Action Group (SWAG), presented by Liz Steel**

#### *Mission*

SWAG was formed this year by residents concerned about the impacts of climate change on Weston. SWAG recognizes that Weston has a number of sustainability initiatives on the municipal level and strives to complement these efforts by focusing their initiatives beyond the municipal level. SWAG aims to amplify the discussion around sustainability issues and inspire effective action,

focusing on awareness and education, leading community based activities, and encouraging and supportive collaborative projects.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To have a Sustainability Committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen to help bring collaboration and coordination among all the various committees and groups working on sustainability issues.
- SWAG hosted the first ever Spring Clean-Up this year, and it was very well received.
- To launch a Fix the Gas Leaks campaign to better understand the numerous gas leaks in Weston and put pressure on National Grid to get these fixed.

#### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

SWAG looks forward to working with the new Sustainability Committee, when appointed, and with many groups and committees throughout town on various sustainability concerns.

### **Tree Advisory Group (TAG), presented by Nina Danforth**

#### *Mission*

TAG focuses on three Ps: planning, planting, and protection. They have been planting up to 12 trees/year since 2004.

#### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To plan for, plant, and protect trees in Weston. TAG prefers to protect old trees whenever possible.

#### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

TAG looks forward to working with other groups who have tree plantings in their charge to help plan for the best location for the trees to thrive in for many years. Eversource provides many of the trees that TAG plants. TAG works with TSAC to protect trees during sidewalk project planning.

### **Rail Trail Advisory Committee, presented by Paul Penfield**

#### *Mission*

The Rail Trail Advisory Committee was charged with helping to bring the Mass Central Rail Trail into Weston and to make it the best trail it can possibly be for Weston, given that the State owns the trail and that Weston didn't pay for it or have much decision-making power in its construction.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To design and construct trailheads at Church Street and Conant Road, with handicapped-accessible parking.
- To work with the Recreation Commission to install benches, rest sites, rain shelters, and other amenities to make the trail more user-friendly.
- To determine how to best provide gathering space along the trail for recreational groups.
- To install plantings that help to the path to maintain the rural character of the Weston.
- To design signage for the trail.
- To complete the trail all the way to Waltham, including the Conant Road underpass and the final stretch to Waltham.
- To direct people to interesting off-trail destinations.
- To work with the Weston Historical Commission to provide education about the historic relics along the Rail Trail.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

RTAC will be working with the Recreation Commission and the Weston Historical Commission on amenities and education along the Rail Trail. At some point, it is anticipated that RTAC will be dissolved and a new yet-to-be-named Rail Trail friends group will step up into some of these roles.

### **Unnamed Rail Trail friends group, presented by Paul Penfield**

#### *Mission*

The Rail Trail friends group, when formed, will be a non-profit organization that will help to support the Rail Trail. Projects that the friends group might take on include maintaining the trail, conducting public relations activities, printing maps, hosting events, erecting and maintaining signage, designing and installing amenities, and coordinating with the State agencies that have decision-making power over the Rail Trail.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- None yet, because it has not yet been officially formed.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

The friends group, when formed, will work with the State as well as with various Weston committees that are working on Rail Trail-related and other open space and recreation projects.

## **Weston Community Gardens, presented by Freddie Wiss**

### *Mission*

The Community Gardens is a part of the Conservation Commission, operating on Town-owned land. The Gardens provide an in-town location for residents to have organic gardens. They currently have 65 gardeners.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To provide a place for people to meet and share their common interest of growing healthy food for families and friends.
- To foster a diverse community of all ages and cultures, with a mutual experience and direct connection with the land and respect for each other.
- To enrich the lives around them with sustainable agriculture.

### *Opportunity for Collaboration*

The gardeners work with the Cemetery Department and the Water Department to maintain the water lines at the gardens. The gardens are governed by policies upheld by the Conservation Commission.

## **Update on the Case Estates, presented by Michele Grzenda**

### *Mission*

The Town of Weston purchased the Case Estates in 2016, after 10 years of negotiations brought on by lead-arsenic contamination that was found in the soil. The Case Estates includes 9 lots, some under the care of the Conservation Commission and some general municipal purposes lots.

### *Upcoming Projects and Initiatives*

- To continue maintenance work on the property and to draft an Ecological Management Plan that guides land management projects for the next 5-7 years.
- To determine what happens to the 3 buildings standing on the Case Estates along Wellesley Street.
- To install a walkway system across the Case Estates, including the Legacy Trail that will travel from the Community Center over to the Summer House site, with connector trails heading to and across Wellesley Street and to Ash Street. This network will connect to a new sidewalk on Ash Street that will travel to the Weston Reservoir.

*Opportunity for Collaboration*

There are many opportunities for collaboration at the Case Estates. The Conservation Commission and Traffic and Sidewalk Committee are collaborating on the design and installation of the Legacy Trail and its connecting pathways and sidewalks. The Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and Weston 300<sup>th</sup> Committee also have overlap with this project. Collaboration will continue to occur between the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission due to the split ownership of the property.

8:20 pm – 9:00 pm

**Opportunity to Chat, Network, and Follow-up**